

# The Two-Minute Trust Builder: The Terri Wanger Rule

Tuesday, July 16, 2013 - by [Tasha Eurich](#)

You might accuse me of being a broken record, but oh well: Trust is everything in business. For every one unit increase in trust, you will see a two-fold increase in results.

Take Herb Kelleher, the founder and CEO of Southwest Airlines. As described in *Nuts! Southwest Airlines' Crazy Recipe for Business and Personal Success*, Kelleher was in the midst of a difficult union negotiation. The union leader returned to a meeting and reported that the issue was resolved. When a new member of the union asked whether he had gotten the agreement in writing, the leader replied, "When Herb Kelleher tells you something has been taken care of, it is taken care of. Herb gave me his word on it and that's better than any piece of paper." Want to quickly build (or repair) trust? One simple approach is to be who you are—not your robotic, whitewashed professional twin. The more your team understands your motives, thought processes, and personal history, the more they will give you the benefit of the doubt.

Let's review a two-minute trick you can use to instantly improve trust. I call it the "Terri Wanger Rule" after the person who had made this phrase her personal calling card: My mom. Terri Wanger, a successful entrepreneur, was raised by two humble parents in Bay City Michigan. From a very young age, they taught their kids that "when you mess up, you fess up, stand up, and clean it up."

I was raised with this adage too. Much as I mocked it in my sullen teenage years, I have grown to understand that it's a powerful tool.

Why? Mistakes are opportunities for you to show your team who you really are. The simple act of admitting that you messed up helps them understand that the current situation wasn't your intention. And everyone knows you messed up anyway, so you'll just appear out of touch with reality if you don't admit it.

So, when you "**mess up**," here's what to do and say:

- **Fess up:** "I was wrong." "I made a mistake." "I'm sorry. This wasn't my intention."
- **Stand up:** "I take responsibility for this mistake." "This one was all me."
- **Clean it up:** "I will take care of the situation." "I am going to make this right."

With a little bravery on your part, it's simple. And good news: The Terri Wanger Rule is contagious in a good way! When you start fessing up to (and fixing) your mistakes, your team members will too. Here's to your professional prosperity!

*Note: This post is adapted from [Bankable Leadership: Happy People, Bottom-Line Results and the Power to Deliver Both](#) (October 2013, Greenleaf Book Group).*